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RR RUEHQU  
DE RUEHPU #0014/01 0041442  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 041442Z JAN 06  
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1982  
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0876  
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 1445  
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 1930  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 2397  
RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU 2627  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 1583  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0708  
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 0303  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0227  
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC 0322  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0763  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000014

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR  
DRL  
S/CRS  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)  
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PKAO](#) [HA](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#)

SUBJECT: HAITI'S CENTRAL PLATEAU POOR AND ISOLATED

¶1. Summary: Hinche is the capital of the Centre department and only 50 miles north of Port-au-Prince, but mountains and bad roads conspire to keep it extremely isolated. Since early 2004 when the former Haitian Army (ex-FAd'H) used it as a staging ground, there has been little violence in Hinche. However, MINUSTAH has not collected many weapons, and the local people have little faith in government institutions, including the police. Many Central Plateau residents regularly make the trip across the border to the Dominican Republic to work illegally. Though there are several hospitals that offer free treatment, healthcare in the Central Plateau is difficult to access because of the population's wide distribution and the region's unimproved roads. End Summary.

¶2. Hinche, a city of roughly 50,000, is the capital of the Centre department, located roughly 50 miles north of Port-au-Prince in the middle of the Central Plateau. But, it is isolated and largely ignored by the Haitian government. Hinche is five hours from Port-au-Prince by deeply rutted roads that are virtually impassable in the rainy season. Hinche has neither running water nor electricity. The Catholic Bishop in Hinche called Hinche a "forgotten city" and said government officials rarely visit.

Commerce Limited  
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¶3. The difficulty accessing Hinche by road severely limits trade with the rest of Haiti. While the valleys of the central plateau are lush and the hills support livestock, few trucks can make the trip to or from Hinche, and those that do often need repairs before making the return trip. Hinche mainly exports non-perishables such as clay and charcoal. Residents grow most of their food locally and buy, sell, and barter at the Wednesday market.

## Hinche Stable but Weapons Still Proliferate

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¶4. According to the MINUSTAH regional security officer stationed in Hinche since 2003, though Hinche has been quiet since the former Haitian army (ex-FAd,H) used it as a staging ground to oust former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004, further violence remains just beneath the surface. Debate about the legitimacy of the ex-FAd,H continues. The ex-officers recite the claim that disbanding the army was unconstitutional and many in Hinche believe that the members of the defunct force deserve further remuneration. Nonetheless, according to MINUSTAH, most members of the former army are old and more concerned with family life than armed struggle against the government. Since early 2004, the 150 police stationed in Hinche have been able to maintain order, although illegal weapons are still available in the town. MINUSTAH has had little success with their Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program, in part because Hinche residents have little faith in the Haitian judicial system or police to settle disputes and are unwilling to turn over their arms.

## Scant Border Control

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¶5. There is little control of the border with the Dominican Republic, approximately 20 miles directly east of Hinche. According to the Catholic Bishop in Hinche, the border is a major point for illegal immigration as well as trafficking in persons and contraband. Many young Haitians regularly make the trip across to work illegally and then return to Haiti. In addition, Dominican merchants regularly smuggle food

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staples into the region to supply local markets, commerce that the Bishop estimated was worth as much as USD 2 million.

## Free Healthcare Difficult to Access for Many

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¶6. Hinche has one dilapidated hospital in town and there are several charitable hospitals in the surrounding countryside, notably Harvard Professor Paul Farmer's hospital in Cange, ten miles south of Hinche. Several Cuban-government provided doctors treat patients in rural areas. Healthcare at the Hinche Hospital costs 50 gourdes (USD 1.25) for patients who can afford the fee and is free to those who cannot. Medicine is only available for those who can pay. The Bishop told Poloff that Hinche's hospital was "dying" for lack of competent health care providers. Malaria, AIDS and other serious diseases are prevalent in Hinche and the Central Plateau, but access to health care is very limited because the population is widely disbursed and the roads are unimproved.

¶7. Comment: Hinche's inability to access outside markets because of the long and sometimes impassable roads makes it difficult for development to take hold. Until Hinche's infrastructure enables it to take part in Haiti's market place, it is likely to remain a forgotten hinterland.

CARNEY